Shortage of officers in the Armed Forces

4187. SHRI EKANATH K. THAKUR: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the armed forces, particularly the Army, is suffering from shortage of officers and personnel indicating that the services are not an attractive employment option for the youth;

(b) if so, the present shortage in the Army, the Air Force and the Navy Officers as per the latest reports; and

(c) the steps Government propose to take to motivate youths to opt for a career in the armed forces?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) to (c) There is a shortage of officers in the Armed Forces, particularly in the Army. The present shortage of officers in the Army, Air Force and Navy is given below:-

Army	Air Force	Navy
11943	546	1098

The position of Personnel Below Officer Rank (PBOs) in the Army is quite satisfactory. The response of youth in the recruitment rallies is overwhelming.

Several steps have been undertaken by the three Services to fill up the vacant posts. The Image Projection Campaign by the Army has been launched in 1997 and currently Phase-III of the Campaign is under way. In addition seminars, lectures and presentations are also organised by the Recruiting Offices at schools and colleges in order to motivate the youth to join the Army and the training capacity of the Army has been increased to facilitate increased intake.

Sustained publicity efforts are being undertaken by the Air Force to attract talented and qualified youth into the officers' cadre. Almost 3000 Schools and Colleges are on the mailing list for sending the publicity material. Campus interviews are undertaken by qualified assessors from Selection Boards so as to interact directly with potential candidates and answer their queries about the service. Schools and Colleges are visited regularly for motivational talks.

Extensive publicity and recruitment drives are being carried out by

the Navy. Motivation drives are conducted in various colleges/institutions in order to widen the scope of target population.

In addition, the valiant image of the Armed Forces is consistently projected through the electronic and the print media. The Directorate of Public Relations of Ministry of Defence, regularly interacts with the media persons while giving Defence related information and endeavours to ensure positive publicity of the same. Regular coverage of defence related events in the print and electronic media go a long way in creating awareness among the masses and motivating the youth to join the Armed Forces. Websites are also operative on the Internet providing career information on the three Services.

Inclusion of local M.Ps. and local M.L.As. as *Ex-officio* Members in Defence Cantonment Boards

4188. SHRI NANDI YELLAIAH: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government would amend Defence Cantonment Act by including local M.Ps. and local M.L.As as *ex-officio* members of Cantonment Boards;

(b) whether Government would amend Defence Cantonment Act to provide direct elections to Vice-Presidents of Cantonment Boards;

(c) whether Government would amend Defence Cantonment Act to reserve 33 per cent of elective seats in all Defence Cantonment Boards to ladies; and

(d) whether Government would amend Defence Cantonment Act to increase the number of wards due to abnormal increase of population of Secunderabad Cantonment?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) to (d) A comprehensive Bill is proposed to be introduced to enact new legislation. The provision for inclusion of local MPs and MLAs, reservation for women, direct election of Vice President of the Cantonment Board and the need for increased representation due to population growth in Cantonments will be given due attention while framing the proposed legislation.

Utilisation of budgetary allocations

4189. SHRI LALIT SURI: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state: